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## DOH-OKALOOSA KICKS OFF NEW SCHOOL-BASED DENTAL PROGRAM IN SIX LOCAL SCHOOLS

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**Fort Walton Beach, Fla** — On August 24, the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) began a new program focusing on dental care and education at six Title I elementary schools. The school-based program allows dental hygienists to go to the schools and provide dental cleanings, fluoride, sealants and oral hygiene education to students.

“Oral health affects our ability to speak, smile, eat and show emotions, but it is also linked to chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease,” stated Dr. Karen A. Chapman, Director of DOH-Okaloosa. “That is why it’s important to make sure kids know how to properly take care of their teeth and to go to the dentist routinely.”

DOH-Okaloosa will be providing cleanings, fluoride and sealants at the following schools and grades:

- Bob Sikes Elementary (2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Florosa Elementary (2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Kenwood Elementary (2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Mary Esther Elementary (2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Northwood Elementary (2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Southside Primary (kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

Oral hygiene education will be provided to all grades.

DOH-Okaloosa joins Children’s Volunteer Health Network, Inc. and Crestview Health Center to ensure students at all Title I elementary schools in Okaloosa County have access to cleanings, fluoride and sealants. Title I schools are those with a large low-income student population.

Dental sealants are thin coatings applied to the tiny grooves on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, which is where most cavities in children and adolescents occur. In addition to protecting teeth from cavities, sealants stop cavities from growing. School-age children without sealants have almost three times more cavities than those with sealants. Untreated cavities can cause pain, infection, and problems eating, speaking and learning.

For more information regarding this program, please call 850-603-6489 or visit [www.HealthyOkaloosa.com](http://www.HealthyOkaloosa.com).

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

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DOH-Okaloosa dental hygienists, Tara Kamm and Melissa Collins, provide dental sealants, cleanings and fluoride varnish to students of Mary Esther Elementary School. (August 24, 2017)